

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 041409Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6482
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2057

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, NU
SUBJECT: EMBASSY-OPPOSITION DIALOG

SUMMARY: AMB AND EMBOFFS HAVE CONTINUED TO SUGGEST TO OPPOSITION LEADERS THAT INTRANSIGENCE WITH REGARD TO NEGOTIATING POLITICAL CHANGE IN NICARAGUA IS DANGEROUS. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE WE HAVE ARGUED THAT THE OPPOSITION SHOULD TRY TO CAPITALIZE ON THE PERVASIVE ANTI-SOMOZA SENTIMENT BY SEEKING CONCESSIONS WHICH WILL LEAD TO A PEACEFUL, CONSTITUTIONAL TRANSFER OF POWER. THERE HAS BEEN SOME LIMITED PROGRESS AS REFLECTED IN THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION BETWEEN AMB AND DR. EMILIO ALVAREZ. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE OF THE HARDLINERS ON THE ISSUE OF DIALOG WITH SOMOZA OR THE LIBERAL PARTY HAS BEEN DR. EMILIO ALVAREZ MONTALVAN, LEADER OF THE AUTENTICO FACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. ALVAREZ HAS SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE AS AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ANALYST WITH ALL CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS AND WITH UDEL. ON APRIL 27 ALVAREZ INFORMED THE AMB THAT THE AUTENTICOS HAD AGREED WITH THE CONSERVATIVE NATIONAL ACTION (ANC),

WHICH IS A MEMBER OF UDEL, TO MAKE JOINT PUBLIC DECLARATIONS IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, HIS PARTY WOULD NOT JOIN UDEL, NOR WOULD THE ANC
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LEAVE UDEL. THE AMB ASKED IF ANY OTHER SUCH CONTACTS HAD BEEN MADE AND WAS TOLD THAT NO AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS HAD YET BEEN REACHED.

2. THE AMB SAID HE FELT THAT CURRENTLY SUPORT FOR THE REGIME WAS AT ITS LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL, BUT THAT THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OPPOSITION LACKED EFFECTIVE GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE

OF THE OPPOSITION SENTIMENT. BECAUSE OF THIS, THE LEFTISTS AND THE SANDINISTAS WERE MOBILIZING AND BENEFITING FROM SPONTANEOUS PROTEST SENTIMENT. THE AMB SAID THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS FAVORED REVOLUTION UNLESS SOMOZA RESIGNS IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THESE LEADERS WERE HOPING THAT THE COMBINATION OF SANDINISTA-LED CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND DEMONSTRATIONS, AND SANDINISTA ARMED ATTACKS WOULD CULMINATE IN A NEW AND BROADER GENERAL STRIKE, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR, LEADING TO A COUP. THE AMB TOLD ALVAREZ THAT THIS WAS A RISKY APPROACH. A BLOODBATH COULD RESULT, AND ANY FACTION MIGHT TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT. THE AMB SAID THAT, BECAUSE THERE IS CURRENTLY SUCH WIDESPREAD OPPOSITION SENTIMENT, IT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE LESS-VIOLENT LEADERSHIP, TO TAKE THE LEAD IN SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION.

3. ALVAREZ AGREED THAT THE TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION LACKED EFFECTIVE GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATION. HE SAID THAT MOST POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN HAD, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, COLLABORATED WITH SOMOZA. HE SAID THAT HE FELT SOMOZA TO BE INSINCERE AND THAT ANYONE WHO INITIATED COMMUNICATION WITH SOMOZA WOULD GET "BURNED". ALVAREZ SAID THAT HE FELT IT WOULD BE "UNPRODUCTIVE" FOR THE OPPOSITION TO MAKE A PACT WITH SOMOZA AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE FIGHTING HIM IN THE STREETS. THE AMB REPLIED THAT CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GON NEED NOT RESULT IN POSITIONS DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE DEMONSTRATING IN THE STREETS. HE STRESSED THAT THE OPPOSITION SHOULD NOT DISMISS AS UNTRUTHFUL SOMOZA'S PROFESSIONS OF HIS DESIRE TO RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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LINQUISH POWER WITH DIGNITY AND HONOR. BY MAKING SERIOUS DEMANDS OF THE GON, HE CONTINUED, DEMANDS DIRECTLY RELATED TO DISMANTLING THE DYNASTIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN NICARAGUA, THE OPPOSITIN COULD TEST SOMOZA'S SERIOUSNESS. THE AMB STATED HIS BELIEF THAT SUCH DEMANDS WOULD BE JUDGED ON THEIR OWN MERITS.

4. AS THE CONVERSATION PROGRESSED, ALVAREZ PROFESSED A MORE FLEXIBLE VIEWPOINT. HE AGREED THAT PERHAPS SOMOZA SHOULD BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE FACE AND MAKE A GRACEFUL EXIT FROM POWER. HE REPEATED THAT MOST LEADERS HAD COLLABORATED WITH SOMOZA AND SAID THAT THE USG WAS NOT SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING SOMOZA IN POWER AND THAT THE PCN (CONSERVATIVES) HAD ALSO PLAYED A PART. HE SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A TWO-STEP CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION BY WHICH SOMOZA WOULD RULE UNTIL 1980 AND RESIGN EARLY, PERMITTING THE HOLDING OF FREE ELECTIONS UNDER SOME TYPE OF "NATIONAL UNITY" GOVERNMENT.

5. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION WITH ALVAREZ DEMONSTRATES THAT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS EVEN ANTI-DIALOG, HARDLINERS ARE BEGINNING TO SHOW FLEXIBILITY.
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